

ECUMENICAL PRESS SERVICE

Published under the auspices of the : World Council of Churches · International Missionary Council
World Alliance of Young Men's Christian Associations · World Young Women's Christian Association
World's Student Christian Federation · World Council of Christian Education · United Bible Societies

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No. 42/25th Year

14th November, 1958.

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Plans for EACC Assembly in Malaya

(Jaffna, Ceylon) - "Witnesses Together" will be the theme of the first assembly of the new East Asia Christian Conference which will meet at Port Dixon, Malaya, May 14 - 26, 1959.

The working committee of the East Asia Christian Conference "in process of formation" met at Jaffna November 1 and 2 to make plans for the forthcoming assembly which will be attended by 150 delegates from all Asian countries and 25 observers.

At the assembly the John R. Mott Memorial Lecture Series will be launched, honouring the late pioneer of the ecumenical movement. This annual lecture programme will feature speakers representing churches in East and West who will be selected to deliver lectures in Asia. The lectures will deal with basic issues concerning the Church's call to mission, unity and service.

The first four lecturers include two Asians and two Westerners. They are Bishop E.C. Sobrepena, Philippines, present chairman of the EACC, and Dr. D.T. Niles, Ceylon, the general secretary of the new Asian ecumenical organization. The general secretary of the International Missionary Council, Bishop Lesslie Newbigin, and the general secretary of the World Council of Churches, Dr. W.A. Visser 't Hooft, complete the slate of speakers for the inaugural series.

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The EACC was organized at Prapat, Indonesia, in March 1957. Its purpose is to further the mission of the Christian Church in Asia through regional cooperation. The Conference is related to both the International Missionary Council and the World Council of Churches.

At the Jaffna meeting of the working committee members reviewed the progress of the young body. They discussed recent conferences held under its auspices including ones dealing with industrial evangelism, family life and mass communications and Christian literature (see EPS No 22). A religious liberty study has been launched by the EACC.

From its inter-church aid secretary, the Rev. Alan Brash of New Zealand, they also heard of the phenomenal growth in giving of the Asian churches since the start of the new organization. In the recent Indonesian crisis an emergency appeal for relief funds found Burma second only to the United States in size of gift with other Asian churches making substantial contributions.

The Assembly, which will be held at a resort on the Malayan coast, will deal with three major topics: "The Witness of Churches in the Midst of Social Change", "The Witness of the Churches in Inter-Church Aid", "The Witness of the Churches in and Beyond Their Borders."

It is expected that the delegates will set up the conference organized on a tentative basis at Prapat, as an organ of continuing cooperation among Asian churches.

EPS, Geneva

Canadian Council of Churches Meets

(Winnipeg) - It is a "monumental absurdity" that more than 150 Christian denominations in North America should each claim to be, in some measure, more faithful than the others to "the primitive church", the retiring president of the Canadian Council of Churches, Dr. Emlyn Davies, told the council's twelfth biennial meeting in Winnipeg, Manitoba, in late October.

"What is tragic," he said, "is that all the Christian communions, from the wealthy politically-minded Roman Catholic Church to the strangest and most insignificant Christian group, are equally involved." Dr. Davies, who is pastor of the Yorkminster Baptist church in Toronto, charged that Canada's churches have created "denominational gods" and some have made idols of the Bible and the Church. All "must carry the shame of our pride, our sin, our stubborn self-will and of our common denial of the fellowship of Christ," he said.

EPS, Geneva

Presbyterians Ask for Korean Unification

(Seoul) - The Presbyterian Church in Korea has appealed for the unification of Korea "at the earliest possible time" in a resolution adopted by the church's 43rd annual General Assembly, meeting in Seoul.

The assembly noted that South Korean churches "have grown in strength by more than 80 per cent" since 1945 but that "more than half of our congregations and Christian friends, located in the northern part of Korea, are allowed absolutely no freedom of faith and are undergoing continuous grinding trouble and often death. We make our appeal with the hope that the United Nations will enable us to accomplish the unification of the Republic of Korea at the earliest possible time," the resolution said.

During the sessions plans were made for a church-wide celebration in the autumn of 1959 to mark the 75th anniversary of the coming of evangelical Christianity to Korea. The 270-member body decided not to take into consideration a motion calling for the Assembly to withdraw the church's membership in the World Council of Churches. EPS, Geneva

Canadian Anglicans and Polish Church Mark Inter-Communion

(Toronto) - A service marking the recognition of inter-communion between the Anglican Church of Canada and the Polish National Catholic Church of America has been held in St. James Cathedral in Toronto.

In a statement before the service, the Anglican General Synod said that the special service would help to emphasize to the people in Canada, "particularly the Polish people, that there is another church serving them in freedom and ready to form congregations in Canadian cities". Two bishops from the Polish church, one from the Protestant Episcopal Church in the US and most of the Anglican bishops who were attending a meeting of their church's House of Bishops, attended the service.

The Polish church was formed in 1904 in Scranton, Pennsylvania, and has about 300,000 members in the United States, Canada and Poland. In Canada the church has a congregation in Hamilton, Toronto and Quebec and four in Manitoba. It is a member of the old Catholic Church Union and the World Council of Churches.

EPS, Geneva

Church's Role in European Cooperation Considered

(Brussels) - The Committee on the Christian Responsibility for European Cooperation met in Brussels on November 8 - 10 and considered "opportunities and problems" for European countries raised by the European Common Market and the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom).

The committee, an unofficial group which has been meeting twice a year for eight years to look at the Christian responsibility in relation to European economic and political cooperation, also examined the political situation in France and its effect on European cooperation, recent developments in Eastern Europe and the conference of European churches which will meet next January in Denmark. Dr. C.L. Patijn of Holland, chairman of the group, was asked to be its representative at the meeting.

In a statement drawn up at the meeting's close, the committee said the realisation of the European Common Market and Euratom "should have been taken more seriously by the European churches, for this initiative contains the real possibility that men and women may live and work together more effectively in a European society".

In discussing relations with Eastern Europe the committee said that "far more important than any economic relations are the cultural, scientific, intellectual, religious and personal contacts on an unofficial level which allow greater opportunities for overcoming tensions and fears on both sides of the so-called Iron Curtain than was possible before and which can give real meaning to the familiar slogan of peaceful co-existence..... It is the duty of Western Christians to maintain and develop contacts with countries behind the Iron Curtain through relatives, friends, professional colleagues and especially between individual Christians and Christian groups, notwithstanding the continuing political tensions

between East and West." Christian churches, the committee pointed out, "should remain closely connected in prayer as well as in mutual help".

New relations with Eastern European nations are also possible in the economic field the committee said, and "we believe that these should be intensified".

In its conclusion, the committee said that "under the present circumstances" the best service the European churches can render is "not to withdraw from their responsibility to support creative action for European cooperation; to study the implications of political ethics in terms of present historical alternatives; to maintain relations with their sister churches in the East and to preserve and strengthen the Christian spiritual unity of Europe."

Present at the meeting besides Dr. Patijn were the Rt. Hon. John Edwards and Sir Kenneth Grubb of Great Britain, Dr. Walter Bauer of Germany, M. Jean Rey of Belgium and Prof. René Courtin of France. EPS, Geneva

United Church in Japan Plans Evangelism Programme

(Tokyo) - The United Church of Christ in Japan has unanimously approved a special evangelism programme for its centennial year in 1959, calling for the "mobilization of all churches". The action was taken by the biennial convention, meeting in Tokyo late in October.

In other action, the convention increased the church's total budget by ¥ 6,080,000 (\$17,000) over last year. Named as moderator of the church is the Rev. Keikishi Shirai, 76-year-old pastor of the Chiyoda Church in Tokyo.

Statistical reports heard during the convention showed increases in every area except Sunday school attendance. Church membership stands at 175,506, an increase of more than 3,000 over last year's figure. EPS, Geneva

WCC Youth Department Holds Consultation

(Crêt-Bérard) - During 1959 ecumenical youth councils in Europe will be asked to recruit more than 900 youth for various activities supported by the Youth Department of the World Council of Churches, according to plans discussed during a series of meetings from October 26 to November 5 at Crêt-Bérard, Switzerland, at the annual autumn consultation of the department. The meetings included a work camp consultation and meetings of ecumenical youth secretaries of Europe, Youth Department national correspondents and the preparatory committee for the 1960 Lausanne youth assembly.

Needed next year will be 650 ecumenical work campers, about 40 youth for the voluntary service projects now being conducted in Austria, 10 ecumenical youth visitors to go from Europe to the United States to take part in denominational youth conferences and camps and 200 youth to participate in a special programme at the Kirchentag, set for next August in Munich.

During their meeting, the ecumenical youth secretaries called for a greater interest in world political, economic and social questions on the part of youth. The secretaries heard reports on the work of the World Council, plans for the Kirchentag, preparations for the Lausanne conference.

The national correspondents, meeting on November 2 and 3, voted to hold

another Faith and Order consultation on the sacrament of Holy Communion in January 1960. It will follow one held last January on Baptism and Confirmation.

More than 1,600 young people representing youth organizations in Europe including a special delegation from the United States and some African and Asian students are expected to attend the Lausanne youth assembly on July 13 - 24, 1960.
EPS, Geneva

In Brief

The proposed merger of the World Council of Churches and the International Missionary Council has been endorsed by the annual meeting of the International Convention of Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ), in session at St. Louis, Missouri. The proposal is now being considered by member churches and councils of the two organizations. Final action is scheduled to be taken at the 1961 Assembly of the World Council.

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Contributions to 52 Protestant and Eastern Orthodox communions in the United States reached an all-time record of \$2,206,593,817 in 1957, an increase of \$165,000,000 over the previous year, according to figures just released by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA. Six major denominations in Canada reported a record \$90,717,000 in contributions.

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The Australian government is issuing special stamps depicting the Nativity scene for use on Christmas mails this year. The stamps will show a child kneeling in prayer before the Star of Bethlehem.

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Bishop Halfdan Høgsbro of Nykøbing-Falster, Denmark, has been elected president of the Northern Missionary Council for the next four years.

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The Lutheran Church in Saptalistan, India, will be constituted as an independent church on January 1, 1959, according to reports from Scandinavia. The church is the result of work of Norwegian, Danish and American missions.

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Church people in the United Kingdom gave £175,000 (\$500,000) to the work of inter-church aid last year, according to an annual report issued by Inter-Church Aid and Refugee Service of the British Council of Churches. The figure is an increase of £125,000 over the total amount given in 1952.

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Representatives of the Mohammedan Mission to Scandinavia have selected a site in Oslo for a mosque, the first to be built in Scandinavia.

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From November 9 to 15 the YMCA and YWCA in eighty countries joined together for the annual Week of Prayer, the 91st observed by the two world movements. The theme this year was: "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation". Meditations were prepared by young people from North and South America, Africa, Europe, Asia, the Middle East and Oceania.

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Historic City Temple in London, bombed during World War II, was rededicated on October 30 in a service attended by hundreds of worshippers, including Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother. Dr. Leslie Weatherhead is pastor of the church.

EPS, Geneva

A Special ReportCommunist Minister of Kerala Interviewed on Future of Private Schools

(Trivandrum, India) - The proposed education bill of the Communist government of the state of Kerala, India, will probably be passed with modifications in line with the decisions of the country's Supreme Court, according to the Kerala education minister.

In an interview with an Ecumenical Press Service reporter, Prof. J. Mundasery, minister of education of the government of Kerala, alleged that private schools had been badly "mismanaged". The bill, he said, was designed to see that teachers receive the full pay allotted them by the government and that selection of teachers is done by an "impartial public service commission."

Of Kerala's 11,000 schools, some 7,000 are privately managed by Christian, Hindu, Moslem and other groups. Kerala's high literacy rate - 80 per cent - has been frequently attributed to the pioneering work of Christian schools in this area. For many years before the establishment of public schools, private Christian schools provided education for thousands of children, both Christian and non-Christian. Today Kerala has the highest literacy rate of any state in India.

The Christian schools are generally admitted to have higher standards than the government operated schools. According to Christian educators, many government leaders prefer to send their own children to the Christian schools rather than public schools. The schools operated by churches serve the entire community and in many of the schools, non-Christians outnumber Christians.

Christian leaders in Kerala have expressed fear that the new bill will mean the end of academic freedom and make it impossible for the management of the schools to select their own faculties. Provisions in the bill as first presented would have enabled the government to take over the schools under certain "crisis" circumstances. It was this part of the bill which caused India's president to refer it to the country's Supreme Court. The court decided that these clauses violated the safeguards for minorities established by India's constitution. The provisions concerning selection of teachers also were considered of doubtful constitutionality by some legal experts.

Even in revised form, the bill poses a threat to Christian and other private schools, Christian educators here believe. They feel that it will be impossible to have a school with "a Christian atmosphere" if the management cannot select teachers directly. And they fear the new bill is another step toward state control of all education which could lead to political indoctrination of pupils.

"There are private schools but no denominational schools now," Professor Mundasery stressed. "I mean by that there is not a single school which has been going it alone economically. And religion is not taught during school hours. The curriculum is already prescribed by the state. All teachers are paid by the state."

"So there has been no difference in the conduct of public schools and private schools as far as curriculum and payment of teachers is concerned," he said, "but the school management has been allowed to select the teachers. And, of course, the privately owned school is free to use the property for religious instruction after regular school hours. They will be able to do this under the new bill as well but the selection of teachers will be done from a list of qualified applicants chosen by the public service commission."

Answering a question concerning the reason behind this new provision, the education minister charged that in some schools the management had misused its authority and had been guilty of malpractices such as withholding part of the teacher's salary for "fees" or giving jobs to teachers who are willing to subscribe to certain funds. He claimed that these practices would be eliminated under the new bill and that teachers would be assured of security and full payment of their salaries.

Professor Mundasery asked why Christianity was divided and unable to demonstrate the Christian life.

"Naturally as the state has assumed more of the economic operation of the schools, it has brought them under more regulations regarding classroom studies and teacher qualifications. If the government is going to offer pensions to teachers, it must be sure of their choice and appointment."

Malpractice in administration of state funds by private agencies has now become a "mass problem", he charged. He said that "naturally the management wants its own men" and are not willing to assure permanency to others.

"There are 50,000 teachers in Kerala. It is only fair that the state government protects the salaries of the teachers, offers them certain legal rights such as assurance that they will get their salary in full, and assures them of tenure of job."

The bill, according to the education minister, will determine the demand for teachers, administer objective tests and prepare a list of qualified teachers. The list, "determined on merit", will be given to the management for choice.

Leaders of Christian education believe this provision will make it virtually impossible to maintain schools with a Christian atmosphere and Christian principles. Although even now teachers in Christian schools represent different religious backgrounds, the school managements feel that it has been possible to maintain certain standards and environmental conditions even though there is no overt teaching of Christianity during regular classroom sessions.

Some church leaders feel that this means the end of Christian schools in a state where one-third of the population is Christian. One church leader says his group may try "to go it alone" by charging fees, reducing the number of students, paying teachers out of income received and conducting fewer schools. This will create great economic hardships, particularly in regard to payment of teachers.

"Those who wish to run private schools may do so if they pay the teachers," Minister Mundasery declared.

Observers point out that since education in Kerala is more than fifty per cent under the management of private schools on property owned by them the new bill will seriously restrict the activity of private schools.

And the argument that teachers are paid exclusively by the state does not take into consideration the historical fact that public education for the entire community for many years was conducted almost exclusively by the church.

Roman Catholic, Mar Thoma, Syrian Orthodox and Church of South India schools are among those who will be hard hit by the new bill. EPS, Geneva

